

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial  
11 North Fourth Street  
St. Louis, MO 63102



# Old Courthouse Tour

## *Teacher Activity Guide*

### Grades 7-12







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# OLD COURTHOUSE TOUR

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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Old Courthouse, finished in 1862, was the county courthouse and a hub of activity during the nineteenth century in St. Louis. A “Who’s Who” of the American west passed through its corridors, and the first two Dred Scott trials took place there. This forty-five minute Old Courthouse program will focus on the role of local government and law.

Upon arrival, the park ranger will take your group into the rotunda and through a walking tour of the building. Students will experience the construction of county government operations, the court system and the events that took place in the Old Courthouse. During the program, students will participate in an activity involving courtroom functions.

Teachers and students are then encouraged to use POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES suggested in this activity guide to complete the program package.

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## CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

The following tested objectives for the states of Missouri and Illinois, as well as National Standards for History and Social Studies, are addressed in this program and guide.

- Associate a given historical event with its effect. (ILS 16.A; MAP 1.6; NCSS IIb; NSH 5)
- Communicate effectively and work with others. (ILS 4, 21; MAP 2.3, 4.6; NCSS IVh)
- Compare and contrast features of everyday life with those of the past. (ILS 16.A, 16.D; MAP 1.9; NCSS IIb; NSH 1A)
- Construct and analyze timelines using results from historical research. (ILS 16.A; MAP 1.2, 1.8, 2.1; NCSS IIb; NSH 1, 4)
- Examine a conflict to resolve it, considering multiple perspectives. (ILS 18; MAP 2.3, 3; NCSS VI; NSH 3G, 5)
- Explore career opportunities at national parks. (ILS 18.B; MAP 4.8; NCSSVg)
- Identify and describe rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States. (ILS 14.C; MAP 4.2; NCSS Xb)
- Identify causes, consequences, and sequences of historical events and developments in American history. (ILS 16.A; MAP 1.6; NCSS IIb; NSH 1A, 3)
- Using maps, locate places and draw conclusions. (ILS 17.A, 17.C; MAP 1.4; NCSS IIIb; NSH 2F)

ILS: Illinois Learning Standards  
MAP: Missouri Assessment Program  
NCSS: National Council for the Social Studies  
NSH: National Standards for History



## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #1 *(suggested)*

### EXPLORE A CAREER

**Budget analyst**—a person who analyzes the park's finances and operations.

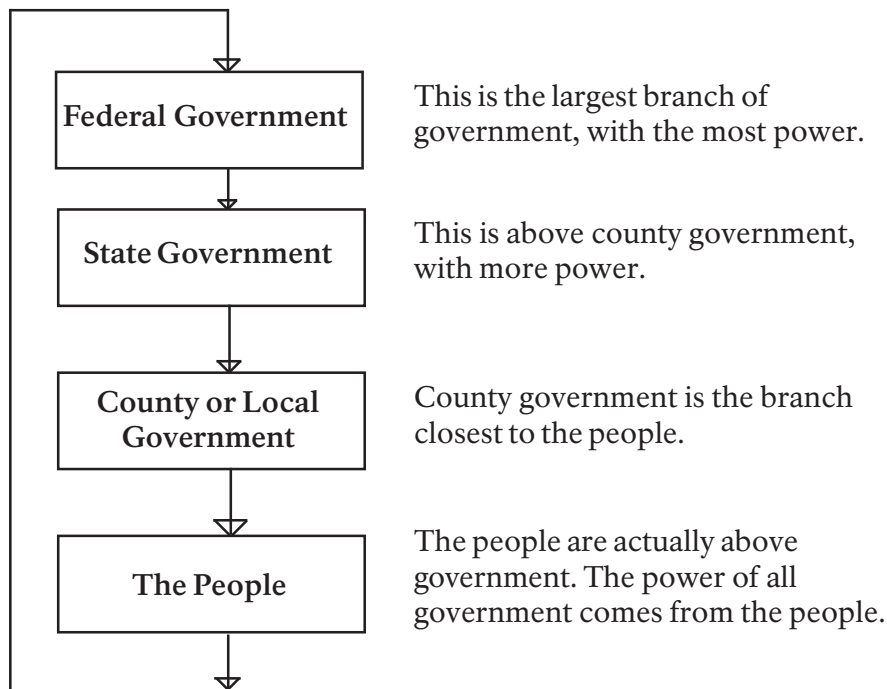


### WHAT IS COUNTY GOVERNMENT?

The majority of Americans know the functions of federal and state governments. The function of county government, however, is sometimes barely noticed. In the nineteenth century, Americans often viewed the local or county government as more important, since it was closest to the people. Let's analyze the functions of county government.

### SEQUENCE CHAIN

On the chalkboard or overhead projector, use a sequence chain to discuss the functions of county government in relation to state and federal systems.



### BEHIND THE SCENES

Making sure there are enough park rangers to serve visitors is one of the many functions of a park's operation. Much like local government, all parks within the National Park Service operate on limited budgets. This makes the budget analyst a critical part of the park's administration division.

### NATIONAL PARK CAREERS

A career in the National Park Service as a budget analyst requires knowledge, experience and skill in accounting, business management, mathematics and computers. National park sites and offices across the country, including the national office in Washington, D.C., all require the services of a budget analyst.

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Organize students into groups of four and have them formulate four questions (one per student) on what they want to know about county government. Then have each group prioritize their list as to which questions they want answered the most to the least.

Examples of questions:

- How many elected officials are in county government?
- Which officials lead the county?
- Where is the county seat?
- What do the county clerk, coroner, sheriff, and commissioner do?

Have students number off within groups, so that each student is a 1, 2, 3, or 4. Call out a number (1, 2, 3, or 4) and in round robin fashion rotate around the room, having each group pose two questions to the class for answers. The student with the called number represents the group. If a question is answered, they choose from another on their list. Those questions that cannot be answered should be written on the chalkboard or overhead projector. Divide up the unanswered questions among the groups to investigate. Encourage students to research in the library, discuss with their parents, or call county government offices to learn the answers. Afterwards have the groups present their information to the class using the “Numbered Heads Approach” explained above.

## CRITICAL THINKING

What new positions might be added to your county government?  
Why are they needed?

## EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

It may seem like a difficult task to establish a local government. Imagine what may have been in the minds of our country’s founding fathers when they set out to establish a federal government. Commemorating this part of our nation’s history is Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, PA. For more information, see page 20 in the Appendix. Have students compare their own method of establishing a county system to the methods used in the eighteenth century.

## AT JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

Our budget analyst is involved with keeping the park’s budget in order, as well as analyzing the costs of new projects and financial data. He/she relies heavily on a comprehensive computer system, but also uses traditional methods of balancing the

books, such as manual calculations. The budget analyst keeps the park financially sound, much like a comptroller does for city or county government.



## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #2 (REQUIRED)

### EXPLORE A CAREER

**Superintendent**—a person who supervises or directs some undertaking, building, institution or the like; a manager.

### CREATE YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT

From PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #1, you learned what is needed for a county government. Now you must build your own.

### COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Imagine the year is 1841 and your state has just been admitted to the Union. The frontier area in which you live has been incorporated into a county. There are 3,000 people in this county. A meeting is called to form the county government.

Organize your class into eight groups, assigning each to one of the roles on the next page. Provide each group with a copy of the County Map and County Facts on pages 22 and 23 in the Appendix. Each group is to make the following decisions:

- ◆ Location of the county seat.
- ◆ Number of elected officials.
- ◆ Leader(s) of county government.
- ◆ Salary the elected officials receive (if any).
- ◆ Tax system necessary to pay for what the county needs.
- ◆ Building to house county government.

Using a “Numbered Heads Approach,” have each group present their position to the entire class.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Set up a voting day with registration, ballots, booths, and box. Have the entire class vote to resolve the final decision.



### CRITICAL THINKING

What were the strong points and weak points for the class in coming to these decisions? Were the final decisions fair to all groups?

### BEHIND THE SCENES

Every organization, be it large or small, private or public, government or business, looks to a person or group of people to make policies and decisions. In national parks, that person is the superintendent.

### NATIONAL PARK CAREERS

A superintendent is responsible for determining policies through which he/she manages the park and supervises its employees. The superintendent must know when to take advice from those under and those above him/her.



## COUNTY ROLES

### #1 ORANGE GROVE

Largest town in the county (pop. 800). The 400 farmers on South Plains (EAST) bring their crops to Orange Grove to be shipped east by rail. Orange Grove believes it should be the county seat, because it is the largest town and has the railroad, which means additional growth.

### #2 RIVERSIDE

Second largest town in the county (pop. 600). This river town sits at the confluence of the Little Muddy and Big Red rivers. Riverside serves the most people in the county as it is the principal hub of transportation. (The railroad will challenge this.) As the transportation hub, Riverside believes it should be the county seat.

### #3 BOOMERS MILL

(pop. 300) This town is located on Boomers Creek and has the only mill in the county. The town serves 400 farmers from the South Plains (WEST). Because of its central location, Boomers Mill believes it should be the county seat.

### #4 JACOBSTOWN

(pop. 100) Located on the Big Red River, this small town serves 100 farmers on the North Plains (EAST). Jacobstown wants a neutral site chosen as county seat in the middle of the county, named Big Red City.

### #5 NORTH PLAINS FARMERS (WEST)

(pop. 300) These farmers use Riverside as the hub and consequently want Riverside to be the county seat.

### #6 NORTH PLAINS FARMERS (EAST)

(pop. 100) These farmers use Jacobstown as their hub. They believe Boomers Mill should be the county seat, because of its central location in the county.

### #7 SOUTH PLAINS FARMERS (WEST)

(pop. 400) These farmers use Boomers Mill as the hub to ship crops to Riverside to be shipped to the east. They have the most expensive business costs in the county. They are turning toward the railroad in Orange Grove to lessen their economic burdens and are undecided about the county seat.

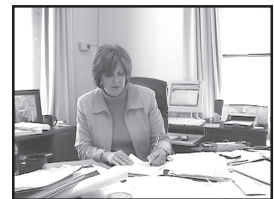
### #8 SOUTH PLAINS FARMERS (EAST)

(pop. 400) These farmers use Orange Grove as the hub and believe it should be the county seat due to its large size and railroad.

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## EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, a National Park commemorating the life of former President Grant is located in southwest St. Louis. While living in St. Louis, Grant applied for a job at the Old Courthouse as county surveyor. Did he get the job? Have students visit Grant's home with their parents to discover the answer and learn more about his life. For more information, see page 20 in the Appendix.



NPS Photo

## AT JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

Our superintendent makes decisions which affect the future of the park, as well as the daily lives of the people who work here. For example, the superintendent makes important decisions regarding the expansion of our park across the river into Illinois. The

superintendent makes decisions regarding new exhibits in the museum and how the park grounds will be used during the annual Fair St. Louis. He/she is much like a commissioner for city or county government.



## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #3 *(suggested)*

### EXPLORE A CAREER

**Computer analyst**—a person who is responsible for updating and maintaining the park's computers.

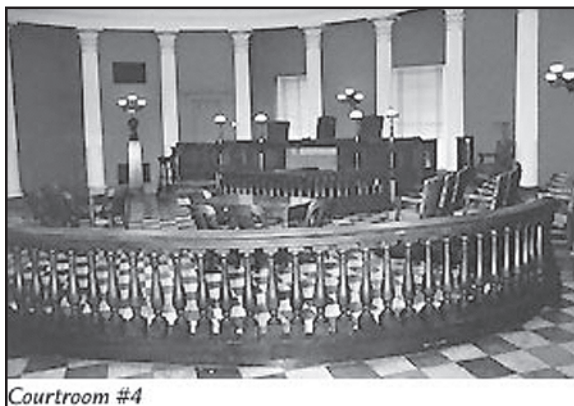
### LOCAL LAW

In 1857 the Supreme Court's Dred Scott Decision divided an already polarized nation on the eve of a devastating Civil War. The decision stated that Dred Scott was a slave and that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. How did this case, a routine local suit for freedom, become one of the most important in United States history?

### K-W-L-S STRATEGY AND TIMELINE ACTIVITY

Organize students into groups of four and have them map what they already **KNOW** and what they **WANT** to know about the Dred Scott case. Using the school library, have each group research information on the events of the Dred Scott case and assemble a timeline. Groups should also identify what they **LEARNED** and what they **STILL** want to know about the case. Each student in each group should be responsible for one part of the K-W-L-S strategy and prepared to present it to the class. In round robin fashion, have each group present its K-W-L-S strategy and timeline to the entire class.

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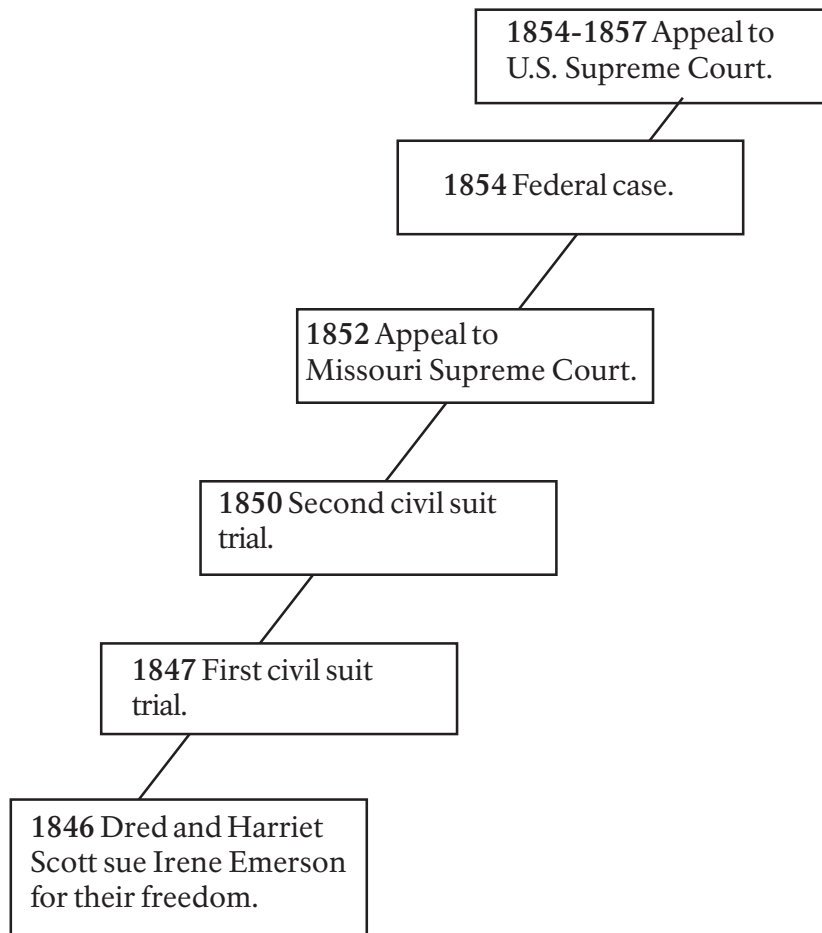
### BEHIND THE SCENES

Most national park employees, regardless of the kind of position they hold, find themselves using computers and relying on their park's computer analyst to keep things running.

### NATIONAL PARK CAREERS

A career as a computer analyst in the National Park Service is exciting and challenging. As the world becomes more computerized there will be a growing demand for skilled computer analysts. The National Park Service, in its effort to serve the public, uses the latest computer technology.

## DRED SCOTT TIMELINE



## EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

The Dred Scott case, which began at the Old Courthouse, had important historical ramifications. Another national park site concerning the law is Brown v Board of Education National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas. This site commemorates the beginning of the end for enforced segregation in U.S. schools. Using the Internet, have students research this case and national park and report to the class. For more information on this park, see page 20 in the Appendix.

## CRITICAL THINKING

Why did the case go through the appeal process?  
What was the outcome at each step?  
If you had been Dred Scott, what would you have done differently?  
How might any changes have affected history as we know it today?

## AT JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

The computer analyst at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is responsible for installing computer systems and software, as well as solving problems. The computer analyst is consulted on projects requiring computer technology, such as our park's

Home Page on the World Wide Web. To locate us on Internet, our address is:  
<http://www.nps.gov/jeff>



## THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

### EXPLORE A CAREER

**Interpreter**—a person who “tells the story” of a national park.

### TOUR OF THE OLD COURTHOUSE

Upon arrival, register your group in the rotunda and review Museum Manners with your students.

#### BRIEFING

Students should be organized into four groups to participate in the activity explained below. Students should also have a working knowledge of county government from PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #2.

#### COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

During the program, the park ranger will involve students in a fifteen minute courtroom activity in which they must defend a given position.

#### INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

Using the Old Courthouse as a primary resource, the park ranger will focus on its construction, county government operation, the court system, and events that took place in the building.



NPS Photo

### BEHIND THE SCENES

The most visible role in the National Parks is that of an interpreter. Also commonly known as park rangers, interpreters present programs, tours, demonstrations, and school programs. They share the story of the park with thousands of visitors from all around the world.

### NATIONAL PARK CAREERS

A career as a National Park Service interpreter is exciting. Interpreters must be good at public speaking, as well as researching and designing programs and presentations.

## VISUALS

The Old Courthouse serves as the primary visual. Photomurals in the galleries and selected photos and maps will also provide excellent visual stimuli.

## HANDS-ON OBJECTS

The park ranger will provide objects for your students to touch, thereby enhancing multisensory exploration.

## VOCABULARY WORDS

*rotunda* - a large round room; one covered by a dome.

*oratory* - the art of speaking in public eloquently and effectively.

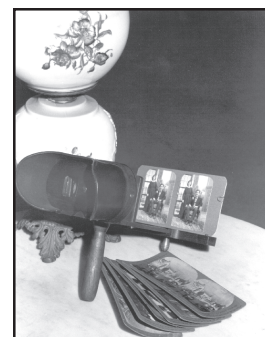
*fresco* - painting on freshly spread moist lime plaster with pigments suspended in a water vehicle.

*mural* - art applied to or made integral with a wall or ceiling surface.

*Commissioner* - the representative of the governmental authority in a district, province, or other unit.

## EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

Have students play the part of interpreter, i.e. research an interesting topic (preferably about St. Louis history), design a presentation, and present it to the class. Remember to use props and lots of enthusiasm.



NPS Photo

## AT JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

The park rangers who work in the Old Courthouse and the Museum of Westward Expansion are interpreters. They interpret the story of the site and explain the museum objects and exhibits. Their greatest challenge is trying to protect the museum exhibits, particularly those like the restored

courtrooms. They assist visitors in answering questions about the exhibits, the park, and the local community. By telling the story of the park, interpreters help visitors preserve and protect them for future visits.



## POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #1 *(suggested)*

### CAREER REVIEW

**Budget analyst**—In addition to national parks, many businesses, (maybe even your own school district) employ a budget analyst. Ask the school's budget analyst, or a parent who is employed as such, to talk with your class and discuss their job.

### DRED SCOTT CASE—CITIZENSHIP

In 1857, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's opinion in the Dred Scott case stated that Dred Scott was not a citizen of the United States, and so he could not sue in federal court.

### COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Who is a citizen? Organize students into groups of four and have them list and discuss what they believe the Constitution says about citizenship. Next have them consult the U.S. Constitution for its definition of privileges and immunities.

Article IV, section 2.1

The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states.

Provide each group a copy of the Who Has Rights matrix on the next page. Have each group discuss and complete. Using a "Numbered Heads Approach", have students present their group's findings to the class.

### CRITICAL THINKING

- How did slaves fit into this?
- What amendments were added to the constitution after the Civil War to guarantee African American citizenship?
- Were there other groups of Americans who could not experience full citizenship? If so, who were they?



### EXTENSIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM— LANGUAGE ARTS

Often we read of mismanagement of local government funds by officials. We can always learn from the mistakes of others. Have students read "Scandal and Dignity: The Building of the Old Courthouse Dome" (on page 24 in the Appendix) and decide how they would have handled the situation.

### MATH

Before the Civil War, slave states counted their slaves as  $\frac{3}{5}$  of a person for reasons concerning representation and taxes. If a state had 5 million people in it and 500,000 were slaves, have students calculate their total population using the  $\frac{3}{5}$  rule.

### WHO HAS RIGHTS?

Identify which individual has the rights that are listed.

The right to own property.		
The right to vote.		
The right to bear arms.		
The right to sue in court.		
The right to testify.		
The right to be in a jury.		
The right to be free.		

(copy/cut)

### EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

While Dred Scott struggled for freedom, another segment of the population was also being discriminated against. Women's rights are also represented at the Old Courthouse in the Virginia Minor case. Virginia Minor sued for the right to vote. Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, NY commemorates women's struggle for equal rights. For more information, see page 21 in the Appendix. Have students research this topic and compare the struggle of women to the struggle of African Americans for equal rights.

### SCIENCE

After the end of slavery, many African Americans contributed to the field of science. One such man was George Washington Carver, whose home is a national park site in Missouri. Have students research his contributions to present to another class. See page 20 in the Appendix for more information.

### ART AND MUSIC

Much of America's art and music has its roots in the experience of African Americans. The home of Scott Joplin is located in St. Louis. Have the music teacher play some of his music and have students illustrate images that his music inspires.





## POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #2 *(suggested)*

### CAREER REVIEW

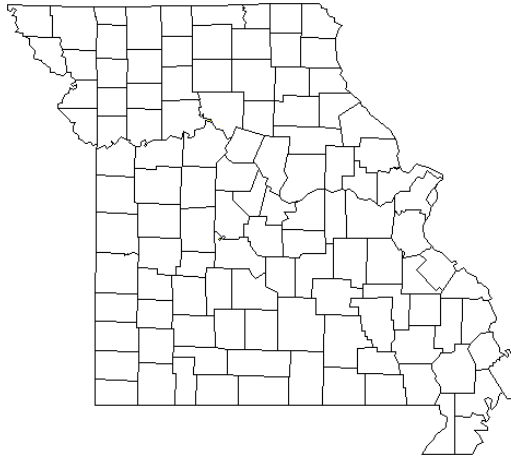
**Superintendent**—effective management of a national park requires a skilled superintendent. Likewise, a school system must also operate under the leadership of a highly trained individual. Often this person's job title is superintendent. Arrange for students to interview the school superintendent about his job.

### CITY-COUNTY SCHISM

In 1876, after years of disagreement and, in effect, functioning under a double government, the city of St. Louis and the county of St. Louis separated into distinct entities. From time to time there is talk among politicians of reuniting city and county. If this were to happen what sort of problems might arise? Where would such a government be located?

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION ACTIVITY

Organize students into groups of four, forming committees to resolve the City-County Merger. Using the graphic organizer on the next page, have students plan their solution. In round robin fashion and using a "Numbered Heads Approach", have groups share their solutions with the class.



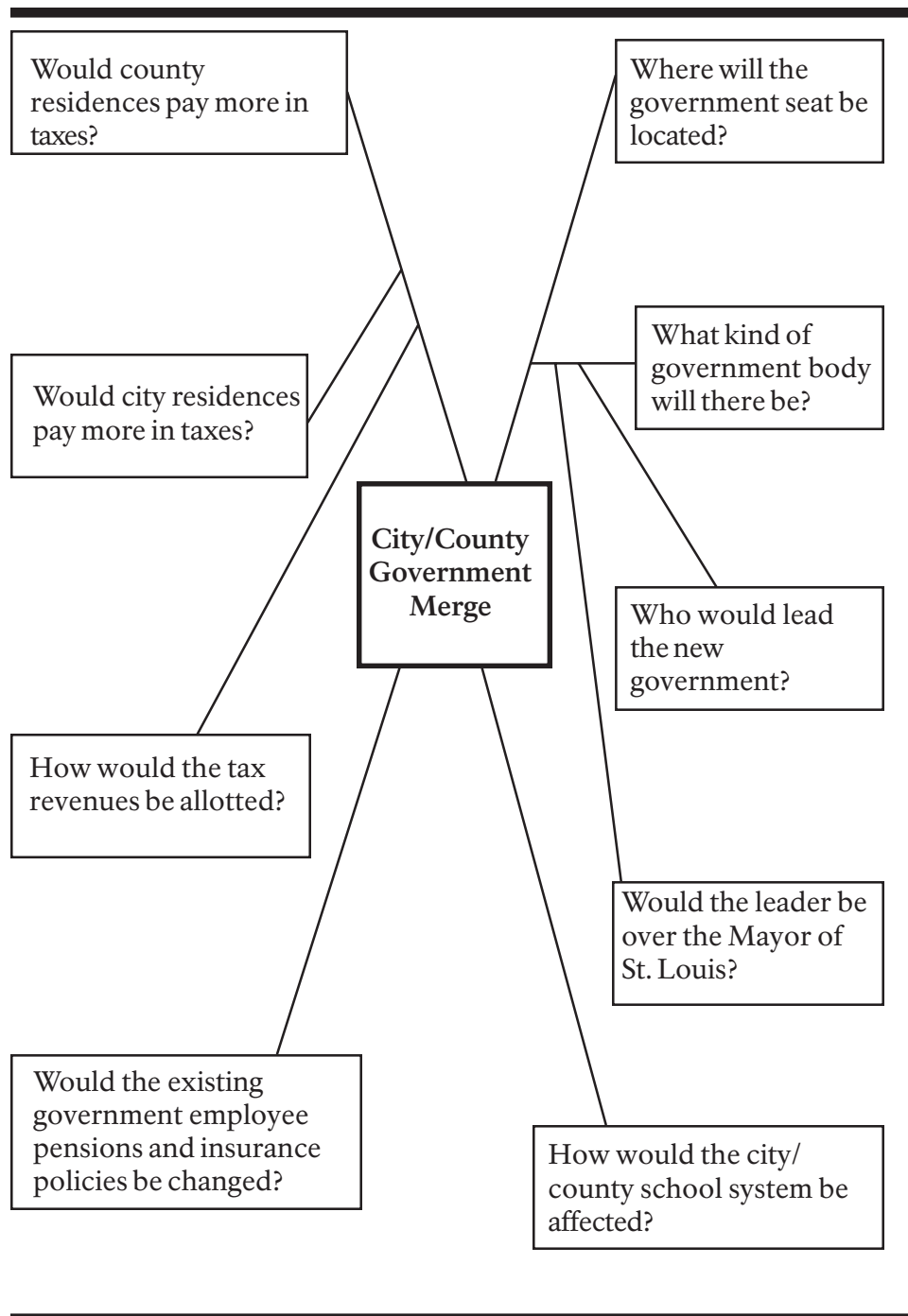
### EXTENSIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM— LANGUAGE ARTS

Your local community has a rich history that is often overlooked. Have students research the history of your school and community. Have them write and publish a class history book for the school's library.

### MATH

There are roughly 2.5 million people in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Using library maps, have students calculate the percentages of people who live in the following areas: St. Louis city, St. Louis county, and St. Clair county, Illinois. How does this compare with Kansas City, MO or Chicago, IL?





## EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

The Gateway Arch is a memorial to the pioneers who settled the west. In a way, the Old Courthouse is a monument to Dred Scott and Virginia Minor. In addition to your plans for a city/county merger, plan a monument including: a brief summary, plans for a visitor center or museum with interpreters, superintendent, budget analyst, and computer analyst.

## SCIENCE

The St. Louis metropolitan area is home to many corporations that employ science in their products or manufactured goods. Ask a parent who works in this field to talk with your class or have students call local companies to discover those that employ people in science-related positions.

## ART AND MUSIC

While visiting the Old Courthouse you saw the murals of artist Carl Wimar. St. Louis was also the boyhood home of artist Charles Russell. Visit the St. Louis Art Museum to view more of their artwork. Have students illustrate concepts for their own design of a city/county government center.



## POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #3 *(suggested)*

### CAREER REVIEW

**Computer analyst**—As the world becomes more reliant on computers, this job is essential to almost any profession. Ask a parent who works with computers or the school's computer teacher to visit your class and discuss their job.

### MONUMENT TO UNIFICATION

When a nation or city builds monuments, museums or public buildings, they are putting their best foot forward. A visitor to St. Louis cannot help but see the Gateway Arch, a monument to St. Louis as the nineteenth century "Gateway to the West".

In POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #2 you formed a committee to unify the city and county. In this activity we fast forward to the future when the city-county unification is approaching its fiftieth anniversary. In honor of this event your class has formed committees to design a monument.

### COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Organize students into groups of four and have them consider the points in the graphic organizer on the next page when planning your monument.

Encourage students to make scale models or drawings of their monuments.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Plan a class or school voting day to choose the winning design.

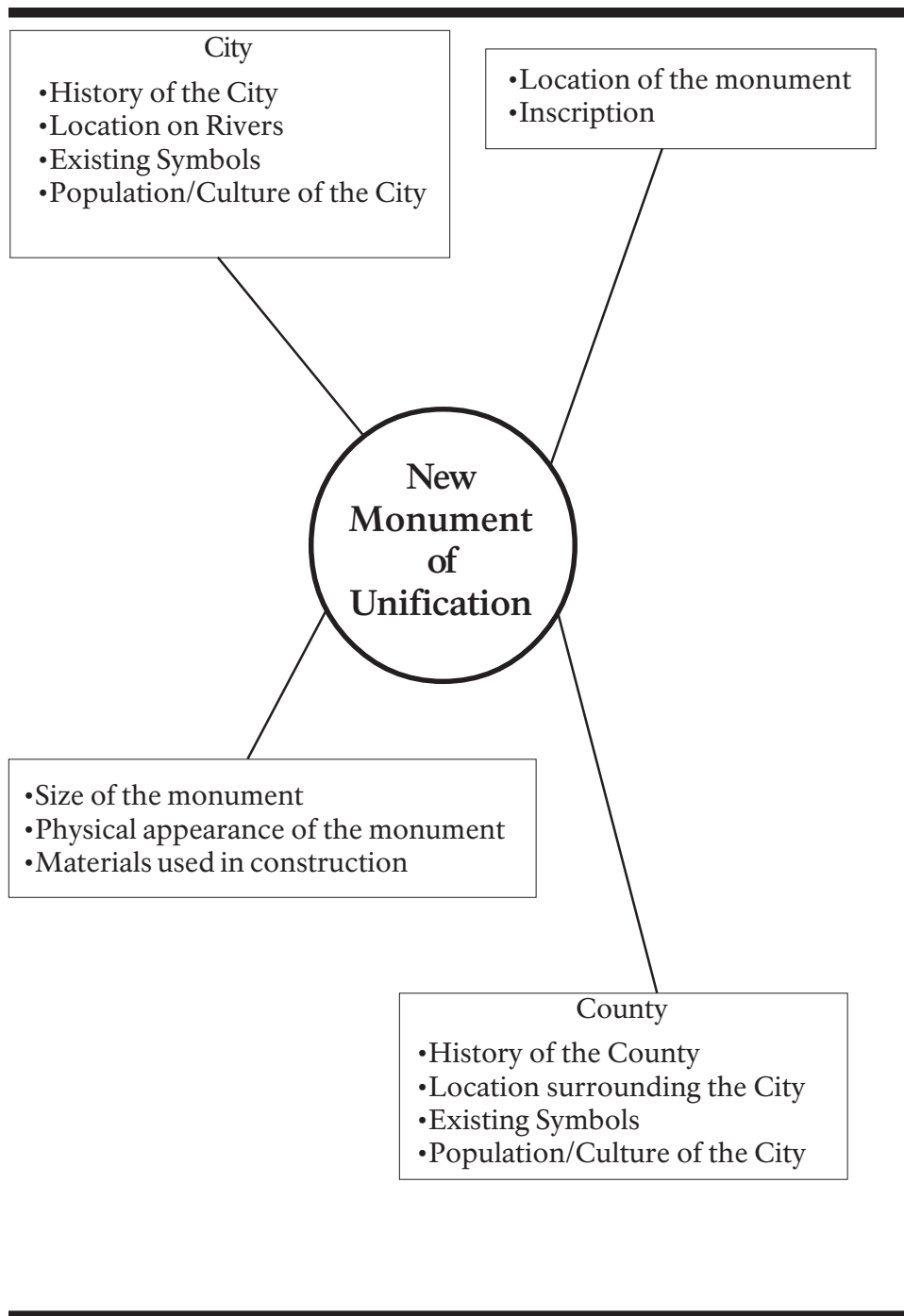


### EXTENSIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM— LANGUAGE ARTS

The Gateway Arch is a memorial to Thomas Jefferson's dreams and soaring intellect and also the everyday people who expanded the country westward. Have students write a poem or a paragraph on the meaning and symbolism of the Old Courthouse.

### MATH

Thomas Jefferson was involved in creating the metric system. In converting miles to kilometers, have students calculate the distance from the Old Courthouse to the county seat in Clayton, MO. Calculate the distance from the Old Courthouse to your school.



## EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. is a National Monument that also memorializes Jefferson. For more information, see page 21 in the Appendix. Using the Internet, have students research this site and compare it to the Gateway Arch.

## SCIENCE

The Gateway Arch is one of the most famous monuments in the world. Using the Internet, have students research its mathematical curve and the scientific explanations for its structural fortitude.

## ART AND MUSIC

At the St. Louis Art Museum in Forest Park, there is a monument overlooking Art Hill that once represented the city. Have students research this monument and compare it to the Gateway Arch. If you were to redesign and improve it, describe your plan of action.



## APPENDIX

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### **PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #1 EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT**

For more information on on this park, contact:

Independence National Historical Park  
313 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 597-8787

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### **PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #2 EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT**

For more information on on this park, contact:

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site  
7400 Grant Street  
St. Louis, MO 63123  
(314) 842-1867

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### **PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #3 EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT**

For more information on on this park, contact:

Brown v Board of Education National Historic Site  
424 S. Kansas Avenue, Suite 332  
Topeka, KS 66603  
(913) 354-4273

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### **POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #1 EXTENSIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM— Science**

For more information on on this park, contact:

George Washington Carver National Monument  
5646 Carver Road  
Diamond, MO 64840  
(417) 325-4151



## **APPENDIX**

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### **POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #1 EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT**

For more information on on this park, contact:

Women's Rights National Historical Park  
136 Fall Street  
Seneca Falls, NY 13148  
(315) 568-2991

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### **POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #3 EXPLORATION AND ENRICHMENT**

For more information on on this park, contact:

Thomas Jefferson Memorial  
c/o National Capital Parks, Central  
900 Ohio Drive, SW  
Washington, DC 20242  
(202) 426-6841



## APPENDIX

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### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #2

### COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

#### COUNTY FACTS

Big Red County gets its name from the “Big Red River” which flows eastward through the county. Settlers first pushed into the area in the 1800s. There are now 3,000 people in the county, who either farm the plains or work in the river towns. The railroad, a harbinger of change, has reached the county.

#### COUNTY MAP

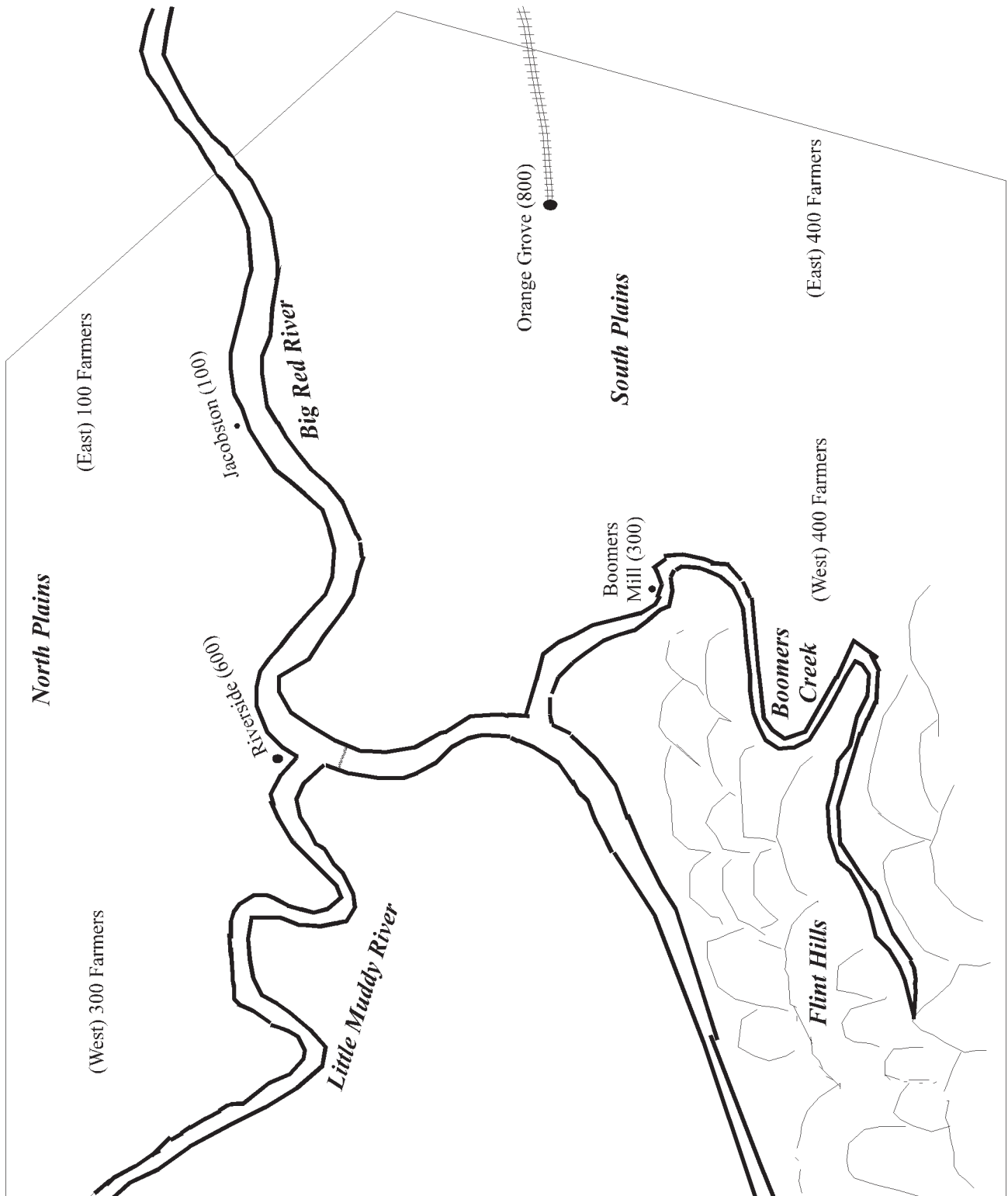
- Big Red River-It flows from the western mountains to the east. It is navigable by steamboat to the Big Red Falls. It is the principal means of transportation.
- Little Muddy River-It is a small river flowing from the north into the Big Red River. Some farmers use it to float crops to Riverside.
- Boomers Creek-It is a small creek that begins in the Flint Hills and flows into the Big Red River.
- Flint Hills-It is a small group of broken hills in the southwest corner of the county. No farming is possible and no inhabitants live in the region.
- North Plains-It is home to 400 farmers.
- South Plains-It is home to 800 farmers.
- Railroad-It connects Orange Grove to eastern cities. It is much cheaper, quicker, and more efficient to ship goods by rail than by river boat.
  
- Towns-
  - Orange Grove, population 800
  - Riverside, population 600
  - Boomers Mill, population 300
  - Jacobstown, population 100



## APPENDIX

### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY #2 COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Map of Big Red County





## APPENDIX

### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #1 EXTENSIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM— Language Arts

Museum Gazette, John Pellarin, October, 1990

#### SCANDAL AND DIGNITY: THE BUILDING OF THE OLD COURTHOUSE DOME

The Old Courthouse has been a landmark in downtown St. Louis for well over a century. This monumental building once housed the St. Louis county government and later the state circuit courts for the city of St. Louis. The completion of the tall, distinctive dome, usually associated with state capitol buildings, gave the courthouse the appearance it has today. The latest technology and architectural design were combined to achieve this fine example of public architecture, this “temple of democracy”. The dignified dome, though, had its beginnings in the indignity of a public scandal.

It seemed that most citizens of St. Louis county in early 1859 were angry. Their anger was directed towards the three county court judges of St. Louis county. Despite their titles, Judges Aaron H. Hackney, John Wimer, and Philip H. Lanham were not judicial judges. Instead they were the administrators of the county government, collectively named the “county court”. In November of 1858, the county court enacted a special tax to help pay interest on certain county bonds and to finance the completion of the county courthouse. The addition of an architecturally daring iron dome would complete this magnificent structure. Its construction had been slow and drawn out and was a sore point for many St. Louisans.

What was particularly annoying was the special tax. It hit like a thunderclap. A storm of protest erupted. Businessmen and tax payers alike were just recovering from a brief but sharp economic depression, the “panic of 1857”, and were in no mood to be taxed. Many felt that the tax was illegal and excessive. Besides, the county court judges were not at all popular and there had been rumors that the court was grossly mismanaging the affairs of the county. On December 30, 1858, a mass meeting organized by the political and business leaders of St. Louis was held in the rotunda of the courthouse. Resolutions were passed condemning the actions of the county court and demanding its abolition. A committee was formed to investigate the finances and conduct of the county government.

There was a second meeting of taxpayers in the courthouse rotunda on January 15, 1859. A local newspaper, the **Missouri Democrat**, reported that “the galleries - the stairways - the aisles and the ground floor of the Rotunda were densely Packed”. Lawyer Thomas T. Gantt, head of the investigation committee, spoke to the crowd and gave the bleak report. The finances of the county were in chaos. No accurate records existed. The county clerk had vague records on county bond obligations. No recent records of the meetings of the county court existed. To make matters worse, it was discovered that a recent county tax collector, George Smizer, was in default to the county treasury for an alleged \$170,000. The county court judges knew of this but kept him on in the hope he could make good on the loss.

Outraged, St. Louisans mounted a campaign to rid the county of the disgrace. Again under the leadership of lawyer Gantt, the Missouri legislature was lobbied to change the county government. In March of 1859, the old three member county court was abolished and in its place a seven member county commission was created. Stricter controls for keeping accounts and financial records were created along with ceilings on tax rates. The new county commissioners at once strived to bring administrative order to the county’s affairs.





## APPENDIX

### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #1

#### EXTENSIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM—

#### Language Arts, continued

The new county commission was not above playing political favorites when it came to picking county office holders, however. The old county court had been solidly Democratic but the new commission had only two Democratic members and the remaining three were Republican/Free-Soilers. The typical rough-and-tumble world of party politics was intensifying and turning ugly in the months before the outbreak of the Civil War. Ulysses S. Grant, having fallen on lean times in St. Louis, applied for the position of Superintendent of County Roads in August of 1859 during the first meeting of the new commission. Grant was more than qualified for the job, but his assumed political affiliation prevented him from getting it. Grant was not very political, but his father-in-law was an outspoken pro-slavery Democrat which colored the commission's opinion of him. As Commissioner William Taussig later wrote of the affair, somewhat embarrassingly, "We felt bound, foreseeing the events to come, to surround ourselves with officers whose loyalty to the Union was unquestioned".

Finishing the county courthouse became the commission's most visible example of reform. It was becoming one of the most impressive public buildings of mid-nineteenth century America. A tall Italian-Renaissance style dome made of iron would complete the building. The only other building in the United States to use this innovative building technique was the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C., already planned and under construction since 1855. The courthouse, however, seemed to be tainted by the old county court misconduct. A past county architect who was appointed in 1851, Robert Mitchell, is given credit for the overall design of the courthouse as it appears today, including the tall dome. He resigned in 1857 over a major dispute with the old County Court dealing with what Mitchell believed were overpayments to contractors working on the courthouse. In his place builder/architect Thomas Lanham, was appointed. Lanham designed a heavy dome consisting of cast iron elements. The construction of that design was just starting when the scandal in the county government broke. Being the brother of Judge Philip Lanham, the situation smacked of nepotism and he was removed by the new county commission in September of 1859. As with everything associated with the old County Court, the heavy cast iron dome came under scrutiny.

During the same month, the new county commission appointed a talented but little-remembered St. Louis architect, William Rumbold. Rumbold had briefly served as the architect of the Kansas Territory in 1856, but most of his work was centered in St. Louis. He was the architect of such buildings as the Allen Market (1855), one of the city's market houses, two impressive commercial buildings, the Ten Buildings (1854) and the Newman Building in 1859. Rumbold also designed the first St. Louis public high school in 1856, a gothic-style building with four towers on the corners, topped with exotic Turkish domes.

Exactly how the controversy over the dome designed by Thomas Lanham began is not quite clear. There was great concern that his dome was far too heavy and clumsy for the rotunda to support. William Rumbold may have started the dispute, reportedly stating that he would rather resign than work on the project. The commissioners were clearly concerned. They appointed a committee of architects to inspect the rotunda and report on its capacity to support the dome. Two reports came out of this committee on November 24, 1859. Three of the members wrote a short report declaring that Lanham's dome could be safely built. The second report was made by William Rumbold and Robert Mitchell. This was a lengthy and detailed engineering analysis which concluded "the rotunda and dome, as designed and partially executed, unsafe and dangerous."



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### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY #1

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#### Language Arts, continued

The county commissioners must have been impressed with Rumbold's report because they requested him to file another on how the walls of the rotunda could be strengthened and asked him to submit a plan for a lighter dome. Again, he submitted a detailed report on December 21, 1859, but he also added a bit of drama. Rumbold took the commission members to the Excelsior Iron Works where he had a scale model of his dome. It was 45 inches in diameter, 26 inches high and weighed 150 pounds. The model consisted of 24 wrought iron ribs connected together at the top by a collector ring and then bound by a series of iron bands on the inner and outer surfaces of the ribs. Resting on top of the model was 13,000 pounds of pig iron. The model held and was proven stable. Rumbold estimated his wrought iron dome would save 462,479 pounds over Lanham's dome but not sacrifice strength or stability.

Early the next year, on January 19, 1860, the county commissioners halted all work on the heavy cast iron dome and ordered Rumbold's lighter wrought iron dome to be built instead. The work progressed rapidly under Rumbold's supervision, and all 24 ribs were in place by July 1860. Two years later, in the midst of the Civil War, the entire courthouse was declared complete. Rumbold was able to receive a patent on his method of dome construction in 1862. He worked on one more county project before he died in 1867. The County Asylum, an institution to care for the county's mentally ill, also was built with a dome of his design. It was smaller and more modest, but just as impressive. It still stands in south St. Louis over what is now the St. Louis State Hospital for the mentally ill.

A writer for the *Missouri Democrat* summed up the affair well on July 4, 1862. Although describing the building as a whole, it could equally apply to the completion of the dome; "For such an expenditure of time, labor and money, there ought to be substantial excellence as the results. The work is truly a grand and enduring one. It is such a piece of beautiful massiveness, as will command the admiration of mankind long after all now living are dead, and for many generations to come."



## READING LIST

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### PARK RANGERS RECOMMEND THESE BOOKS

Dosch, Donald F. Old Courthouse: Americans Build A Forum on the Frontier. St. Louis, Missouri: Jefferson National Expansion Historical Association and the National Park Service, 1979.

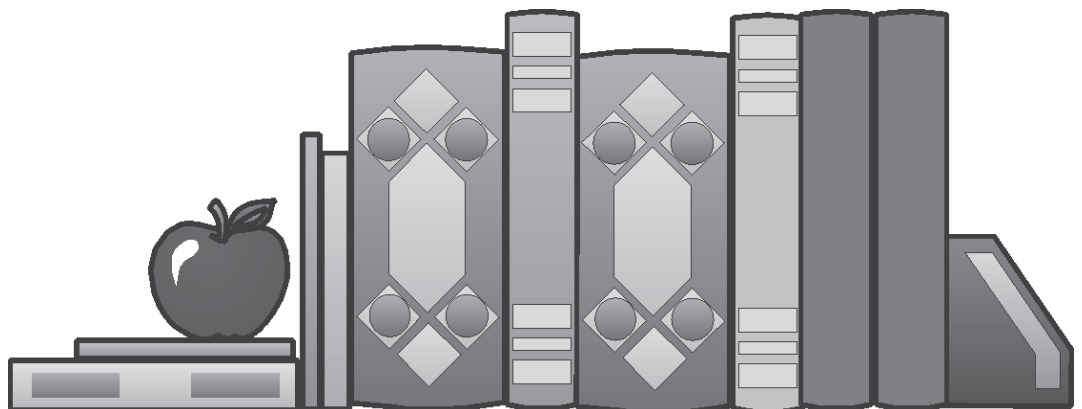
Ehrlich, Walter. They Have No Rights: Dred Scott's Struggle for Freedom. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Fehrenbacher, Don E. The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics. New York, New York: Oxford Press, 1978.

Lindenbusch, John H. Historic Structure Report. Denver, Colorado: National Park Service, 1982.

Primm, James Neal. Lion of the Valley. St. Louis, Missouri: Pruett Publishing Company, 1981.

**Note:** Many of these books are available through the Jefferson National Parks Association. Call (314) 231-5474 or (800) 537-7962 or visit [www.historydirect.com](http://www.historydirect.com).





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Museum Gazettes



“St. Louis and its Past—The Fourth of July”  
“A Victorian Christmas at the Old Courthouse”  
“Carl Wimar and the Old Courthouse Murals”  
“The Old Courthouse Murals”  
“Scandal and Dignity: The Building of the Old Courthouse Dome”

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